

## **COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, TRAFFICKING FOCUS OF WEBCHAT**

Sharon Cohn, vice president of International Justice Mission, an agency that aids victims of violence, sexual exploitation and slavery, discussed efforts to combat violence against women worldwide.

Following is the transcript:

April 20 Democracy Dialogues Violence Against Women

Women and girls throughout the world continue to face gender-based violence through such activities as trafficking and forced prostitution. Join Sharon Cohn of the International Justice Mission for a discussion on global efforts to combat violence against women in all its forms and her hands-on efforts to make a difference. April 20, 10:00 a.m. EDT

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: Welcome to USINFO webchats, you may post a question now or during our chat with Sharon Cohn of the International Justice Mission. Ms. Cohn will be online to take your questions today, Thursday, April 20 at 10:00a.m. EDT (1400 GMT).

SHARON COHN: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you. Trafficking in women is one of the largest sources of profit for organized crime in the world. It has been called many things, but I think it can be most clearly understood as serial rape for profit. UNICEF has estimated that 1 million women and children are trafficked into forced prostitution new each year. Effective law enforcement is a vital component in eliminating this trade. Victims must be rescued and provided holistic, long-term aftercare and perpetrators must be arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to jail terms.

QUESTION [Dr. Ali Al-Hail]: Hi Sharon: Governments of the World with varying degrees of course, are responsible for violence against humanity, both violence against women and men. I cannot believe for a single moment that, a government, any government has no capability to stop the others, (whose interests in some cases are linked

to them) forcing women into prostitution. No woman on earth, by scientific\empirical definitions and findings goes for prostitution by choice. It's the governmental system that, pushes her into this slippery path. Absence\Lack of social justice is the prime factor. Both men and women are marginalized, brushed aside, though qualified just because they don't have the right name. This happens in lots of 'human' societies. I have an immense studies on women in the Arab Gulf region, 'Qatari women and the internet', Muslim women and so forth. I found that, social justice, which is a governmental crime in itself is behind violence against both sexes. For example, honor crimes in lots of developing countries have been carried under lots of bans, religion, traditions, cultures. However, men's envy of women's abilities and qualifications in most of these cases, are responsible for such crimes by men. What governments (whose their male citizenries commit these honor crimes against their 'women citizenries') did hardly nothing. A global collective initiative is urgently, needed to stop such an atrocity against women and men. I will be awaiting eagerly, for your response to all of this...

A: You've raised many interesting topics, including motivations behind prostitution and governments' responses to oppression of their people. I think that last piece "on government response" is what I'd like to talk about.

IJM focuses on working with local authorities and governments to build the capacity of the legal system in country. The crimes on which we focus are against the local, domestic law.

Q [segalem] I am involved with a newly formed Non-Profit Organization, called Voice of African Women and Children (VACW). VACW was started to assist African Women and Children who are suffering as a result of natural and man-made disasters. VAWC hopes to inspire, encourage, guide and support women to become active participants in their social, economical and political systems as informed voters, effective advocates and elected leaders. Our government gives tremendous amount of funds to African leaders who misuse these funds. Women's representation in government and decision-making is almost non-existent. As more than 50% of society their participation is necessary and it can be achieved through education, empowerment, inspiration and support. Who will know a woman's problem more than another woman? Why do we keep

on giving tax payers funds to governments knowing that it will not reach the needy? If one wants to help who is the contact person.

A: The best way to contact IJM is to email us at [contact@ijm.org](mailto:contact@ijm.org).

Q [saqartvelo25] It is very good, that this Web chat created and I am member of it at that time I HAVE one QUESTION. 1. how many people are victims of trafficking every year in other countries, there ages, and how many guilty are arrested?

A: This is a great question. There are a number of valuable country-specific resources. The U.S. Department of State has two on their website that I think you would find helpful. The first is the Country Human Rights Reports that are issued each year. There is a section towards the bottom of the document on trafficking in women that often provides helpful statistics. The second is the Trafficking in Persons Report issued by the State Department that provides information on what a country is doing to combat the problem, including statistics on arrests. For example the 2005 TIP report states that there are an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children trafficked across international borders each year.

In addition, you may want to take a look at The Protection Project website which has country specific reports.

Q [IRC Cairo] hi

I would like to know if you have document about violence against women in the worldwide, case study Egypt and U. S. A. I would like to have a copy of that list, actions taken to help women, plz. thanks.

A: Please see the answer posted above that references the State Department documents that may provide helpful information. Human Rights Watch has country reports that may also provide the information you want.

WEBCHAT MODERATOR: Dear participants, In order to help our guest answer as many questions as possible, please submit one question at a time.

WEBCHAT MODERATOR: The Department of State is required by law to submit a report each year to the U.S. Congress on foreign governments' efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons (TIP). [The 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/>) is available on the State Department Web site.]

Q [IRC Antananarivo]: Hello, my name is Ms. Chandoutis Raoera, I'm Law teacher at the University and am responsible for a project on rape perpetrated on girls and women in Madagascar. It begins to become a real issue here. For example, incest, rape of a little girl from age 3 months.

My question is: What solution should the state bring -- does the State have to insist on the cultural aspect or legal or educational solution in order to prevent such acts because it is a real hindrance to the development of the country.

What kind of structure needs to be set up to help the family victim of such behavior?

What is the experience in the US or elsewhere on this? What needs to be integrated in the educational program in order to face this issue?

What action should the civil society take to solve this problem of violence against women?

A: I find that the core problem with un-prosecuted child sexual assault is that the legal system is not effective or swift in punishing individuals that commit these crimes. For example, in some places, a child rape case may take 3 or 4 years to bring the trial to judgment. The case can be further impaired by the State's failure to protect the victim from intimidation during that process.

In the U.S., the Department of Justice has funded a number of programs to combat violence against women, particularly domestic violence. In one model program in New York, the center provides holistic services including legal, medical and counseling to try to address the multiple needs of a victim of violence.

Rape needs to be elevated to a "major" crime by law enforcement so that the appropriate resources are devoted to it.

WECHAT MODERATOR: The State Department's electronic journal Responses to Human Trafficking (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/0603/ijge/ijge0603.htm>) has more information on how the global community is fighting trafficking.

Q [segalem]: I agree with you that effective law enforcement is needed, however how effective can a law be without participation of women in decision making? Who will

understand a woman's problem in society more than another woman? As such women all over the world should be organized to empower women to fight trafficking of women.

A: I certainly agree that women should be at the forefront of this effort. In many countries the Minister of Women's Affairs is a powerful advocate against trafficking, but there needs to be more women involved in every level of government and civil society.

Q [Marek]: What does "intervention" mean? Does your organization actually go to the places where people are held?

A: Yes, we have offices around the world. We work with local authorities to identify victims of slavery. The local authorities conduct operations to rescue the victims and we support these efforts.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: The rights of women and girls are covered in the State Department's series of one-page fact sheets "Principles of Democracy (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/principles/women.htm>)."

This series is available in many languages including Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Korean, Pashto, Persian, Russian, and Spanish.

Q [IRC Antananarivo]: Hello, my name is RAZAFINDRAMBOA Mirana.

I work in a travel agency.

For this I will focus my question on this area, which is about violence against women in our country. It is really sad to notice that it's the parent itself who sends their girls, in majority minor, to get involved in a prostitution relationship with foreign tourists to earn money.

Basically, virgin girls really interested those tourists too, and they are ready to spend lots of money to get the young girl.

In one side, some girls agree to get involved in this awful behaviour but fortunately in the other side, we can meet other girls who disagree and would like to be free from this, so would you please give suggestions and solutions for those young people? Thank you so much for your reply.

A: Thank you for your question. In some cases, family members have been involved in trafficking. Where you suspect that a girl is being trafficked, I recommend that you contact a local anti-trafficking NGO. If there is none in your area, a human rights organization or women's organization may be able to help. If they cannot help directly,

they may be able to identify a trustworthy law enforcement official to whom you can bring the information.

Q [segalem]: Darfur is one of the main problems, do you have an office in Sudan?

A: We do not have an office in Sudan at this time.

WECHAT MODERATOR: Please let us know what other topics related to women's rights and human rights you would like to see discussed on USINFO Webchats. Send your suggestions to [usinfowebchat@state.gov](mailto:usinfowebchat@state.gov) (<mailto:usinfowebchat@state.gov>).

Q [IRC Antananarivo]: Hello my name is Chantal, I am 38 years old and president of the association Zetra. My questions are:

what are the different types of violence that happened to women?

Can we call violence against women the fact of using women's photo in advertisement to attract people?

Do you think that women in developing countries must take care of her husband?

Does violence against women still exist in developed countries? Could you give some examples?

Is sexual harassment at the work place a violence against women?

A: These are all serious issues and merit additional discussion. To clarify our position at IJM: We focus on situations where coercion and deception are the primary drivers for the victim's oppression. Yes, violence against women does still exist in developed countries. See my previous answer for resources on this condition.

Q [segalem]: You said you don't have an office in Darfur, Sudan, are there any offices in Africa. If so where? Where can I get a list of your offices in Africa?

A: Please contact us at [contact@ijm.org](mailto:contact@ijm.org) for additional information on our work in Africa.

Q [lalati]: I'm Lalatiana Rakotondrazafy from Madagascar, I'm a journalist and the big problem is according to me, how to convince women, especially in rural areas that they have to report violences at work or at home, perpetrated by their husbands or their boss, because many of them, who are victims choose to shut up or to think that it's normal that their husbands beat them, so would you share with us your experience in how to struggle for it?

A: Great question. Fear and intimidation often inhibit justice. I was in Africa a few months ago talking to some mothers who had determined to bring cases against their children's rapists, even when the perpetrators were other family members. As one mom told me (paraphrase), "I did not bring this case forward for me, but I want my daughter to know that there is justice. I want her to see justice."

When women obtain justice, their success encourages other women to pursue it. It does take time and perseverance and courage.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: "What can ordinary citizens do to prevent trafficking of women?" To share your ideas and read what other people have to say, please go to our Democracy Dialogues online discussion ([http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng\\_democracy\\_dialogues/Online\\_Discussion.html](http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng_democracy_dialogues/Online_Discussion.html)) Web site. No registration or login is required.

A: Thank you for taking the time to participate. I enjoyed talking with you. If we can help in any other way, please feel free to contact us at [contact@ijm.org](mailto:contact@ijm.org).

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: Thank you for participating in today's webchat. The webchat is now closed. A transcript of today's chat will be available on this site within the hour. A web-based transcript will be posted to the USINFO Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>) shortly.

There are two more USINFO Webchats taking place today, to join the chats on "Jazz on the Radio" or the chat on "How 'American' is American Culture?", please click on "change user" above log into the chats for April 20.

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